

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

LESSON VIII, FIRST QUARTER, INTERNATIONAL SERIES, FEB. 23.

Text of the Lesson, Acts vi, 1-15.
Memory Verses 7, 8—Golden Text, Matt. x, 23—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

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1, 2. "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." This was the decision of the twelve when they began to be some murmuring among the disciples concerning the daily ministrations of things temporal. As the number of the disciples multiplied it could hardly be expected that in these new-born churches there would not be manifest some of the weaknesses of the flesh, such as wrath, strife, envyings and such like (Gal. v, 20). Even Peter, James and John might remember quite a number of things in their own lives, even after they had been a year or two with Christ, which were of the flesh and not of the spirit; so it is to be hoped that while they determined that they could not take time to see to these seemingly unspiritual affairs they were patient with the murmurers.

3, 4. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." They would not serve tables, but they would pray and search and teach the word. They recognized the importance and the difficulty of attending to the daily ministrations, for they saw the necessity of a committee of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.

5, 6. "They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip." The other five are not mentioned again after this verse, which is not necessarily anything against them. Philip is mentioned sixteen times and Stephen, who became the first martyr for Christ, is mentioned seven times. If the mind of the majority is a correct guide, then the appointing of this committee was the proper thing, for the suggestion pleased the whole multitude. There was something in those days in the laying on of hands (1 Tim. iv, 14; 11 Tim. i, 6), but it was not confined to the hands of the apostles (Acts ix, 17; xiii, 3). The laying on of hands in our day is not unlike the shaking of hands; sometimes there are life and inspiration and sometimes a chill. Barnabas, the son of consolation, was like Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith (chapter xi, 24). There is no reason why each believer should not be so filled.

7, 8. "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." The word of God increased, or, as in xii, 24, "grew and multiplied," and in xii, 20, "grew mightily and prevailed." The number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great company of the priests became believers. It was truly a great and mighty work of the Spirit of God and was not confined to the apostles, for Stephen, willing to serve tables, was greatly used, God working wonders and miracles by him. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth (Rom. i, 16), and as the word is preached the Spirit works, convincing of sin and righteousness and judgment. When a servant of Christ preaches the word of God, he has a right to believe that it will accomplish His pleasure and never return to Him void (Isa. lv, 11). We may learn a lesson of assurance from the devil in this matter, for when he sowed his tares he seems to have had no anxiety about their growth, for he went his way, sure that they would grow (Matt. xiii, 25). Let us have faith in God that He will take care of His own word and that no word from God shall be void of power (Luke i, 37, R. V.).

9, 10. "They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." The Lord Jesus had promised a mouth and wisdom which no adversary could gainsay or resist (Luke xxi, 15), and this was a fulfillment of His promise. The wisdom was the wisdom of God and the spirit was the Spirit of God. As with the Lord Jesus the words and works were all the Father's, so in these Spirit-filled men the words and works were all the Lord's (John xiv, 10; xvii, 18). We think of the night in Gethsemane when, in reply to their saying that they sought Jesus of Nazareth, He simply said, "I am," and they went backward and fell to the ground. It was the same word that healed the leper, cast out demons, rebuked fevers and all manner of disease, stilling the storm and, away back in the beginning, created all things. What do we know of the power of His word in us or through us, or of the experience of Paul in these words: "Striving according to His working which worketh in me mightily" (Col. i, 29).

11, 12. "They caught him and brought him to the council." The adversary can stand ten thousand ordinary believers of the Laodicean stamp and be not a whit afraid of them, but let a Peter or a Stephen, filled with the Spirit, stand boldly for Christ and the resurrection, and the devil will do his best to stop them. The power of God in Stephen was more than Satan could put up with, and so he stirred up the rulers and the people to lie about him and to arrest him.

13, 14. "And set up false witnesses." So Jezebel did to Naboth, and so these same rulers did to our Lord Jesus. It was written concerning Him, "False witnesses did rise up; they laid to My charge things that I knew not." "They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of Mine head; they that would destroy Me, being Mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty" (Ps. xxxv, 11; lxxix, 4). We must, if we follow Him fully, expect the same treatment He received for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (11 Tim. iii, 12), and He Himself said, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John xv, 20).

15. "And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." He was no doubt thinking of the Lord Jesus and all that Christ had endured for him. By faith he saw Christ and not these wicked witnesses or rulers, and the glory of Christ was seen upon him. We are apt to think it very hard when people wrongfully accuse us and lay to our charge things we know not, but we should consider it as blessed fellowship with Christ, remembering His own words, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. v, 11, 12). Some associate this angel-like appearance of Stephen with the time of his martyrdom, but it was before he gave his address to the council. May we ever so see Jesus that we shall reflect His glory.

OUR COLORED CITIZENS.

AMONG THE CHURCHES.

It is said that the next ministerial and layman's conference of the A. M. E. Zion church will be held in Madisonville, Ky., Feb. 18 and 19, 1902. The pastor and members of the church will prepare to accommodate all the members and delegates who will attend the meetings from Earlington and other points. Among those who are expected to be present and take part in the meetings are Revs. J. H. Gough, I. F. Aldridge, J. E. Tice, J. W. Word, E. H. Edmondson, H. H. Carter, J. U. Browder, L. C. Majors, Rev. Hightower and Prof. S. E. Duncan, Miss M. E. Chestnut, Mrs. L. B. Evans and many others.

Rev. Hurt, former pastor of A. M. E. Zion church, filled the pulpit at said church.

The Christian Endeavor is very interesting.

Mrs. E. Merriweather has been very ill for two weeks. She is better.

Rev. T. H. Merriweather, pastor of A. M. E. Zion church at Clarks-ville, has been faithful at the bedside of his sick wife.

Rev. Gordon is on the sick list. Mrs. C. Moore is out again.

Clifton King is suffering from a severe fall.

Miss M. Slaton is out again. Wm. Boston is on the sick list.

Some news received too late last week.

SCHOOL NOTES.

Public school children have exercises in honor of Washington-Lincoln Friday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Your presence is solicited.

"The Pathfinders" have changed programme.

Children made valentines for their parents last Friday.

Don't fail to witness the inauguration of President Washington on next Friday.

Parents and those who have the oversight of children should teach and train them carefully. Teaching is instructing them what to do and training is having them to do what you have instructed. You cannot do this properly without the Bible and family altar. You who are having trouble in governing your children, try daily Bible reading and prayer with them and, if necessary, flog them like splitting rails. Do it kindly, but do it well. They won't die. Then love them. Love them so well that you will take time to teach them how to be polite to every one, how to deport themselves on the street, in the stores, at the post office, at the depot, at church and everywhere. Do not simply say "behave," for many people think if they are not in a fight they are behaving. Love them so much that you will give them ample time for preparation of lessons and not let them spend their time in idleness. Love them so much you will visit the school and see how they are succeeding, and last but not least, love them enough to give them the spare

room and a good light where all is quiet, that they may be free to learn to love and take care of books and to study.

Mrs. C. F. Bailey was called to the bedside of her very sick son, Willie, at State University Monday night. We pray for his early recovery.

The Peach Legend.

Almost all fruits and flowers have their legend. One about the peach comes from Japan and tells how a poor, pious old couple were searching for food by the roadside. The woman found a peach, which she would not eat of, though starving, till she could share it with her husband. He cut it exactly in half, when an infant leaped forth. It was one of the gods, who had, he said, accidentally fallen out of the peach orchard of heaven while playing. He told them to plant the stone of the peach, and it brought them happiness, friends and wealth.

Kidney complaint kills more people than any other disease. This is due to the disease being so insidious that it gets a good hold on the system before it is recognized. Foley's Kidney Cure will prevent the development of fatal disease if taken in time. Sold by John X. Taylor.

The estimated population of Havana for December last was 271,363, of whom 72,492 were colored.

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CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

Topic For the Week Beginning March 16—Comment by Rev. S. H. Doyle.

Topic.—A noble purpose.—Dan. i, 8-20. (Temperance meeting.)

"Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat nor with the wine which he drank." This is the purpose to which the topical reference alludes, and we have only to study the circumstances under which it was made to see the nobility of it.

1. The nobility of Daniel's purpose is illustrated in his age. He was a young man and had been selected because of his natural abilities to be educated for the service of the king of Babylon. For Daniel at that age to take a determined stand upon the side of his moral and religious convictions was certainly the manifestation of nobility of purpose. How many young men and young women indulge in doubtful and in harmful practices, excusing themselves on the ground of their youth! They are young. They must sow their wild oats. They must have a good time in their youthful days. Not so with Daniel. Instead of sowing wild oats in his youth he "remembered his Creator in the days of his youth." And he never lived to regret it. Nor does any young man who in the days of his youth purposes in his heart that he will lead a virtuous and sober life.

2. The nobility of Daniel's purpose is illustrated in the place in which he made it. He was in a strange land, a Hebrew captive and exile in the land of Babylon. In Babylon he was surrounded with idolatrous faith and worship. To take a firm stand religiously in such a place proves the nobility of his purpose. How many young people would have said: "I am in a strange land. I do not believe in eating defiled meat and in drinking wine, but I had better do it here, since my captors demand it of me. I'm in Babylon now, and I had better do as Babylon does." The strong temptation would have been to take this course of action, yet Daniel did not do it, even under such circumstances. May his example inspire the emulation of all young people and help them to stand firm for sobriety and godliness amid any surroundings or with any people. Men may laugh at us or ridicule us, but we should fear God rather than man and obey God rather than man.

3. The nobility of Daniel's purpose is illustrated in the fact that it was contrary to custom. It was customary for those who were being trained for the king's service to eat the king's meat and drink his wine. Custom is the ruin of many a young person. But Daniel was no slave to custom. He placed conscience above custom. It requires great strength of character oftentimes to do this, and yet conscience and not custom should be our guide. If it were, the drunkard's grave would be robbed of many of its victims. Let us, like Daniel, not fear to stand against custom when to conform to it means to endanger our moral or spiritual welfare.

Daniel purposed nobly and nobly executed his purpose, and God was with him and blessed him. God's presence and God's blessing are vouchsafed to all who in the midst of temptation will follow Daniel's example. Will you do it?

BIBLE READINGS.

Rev. x, 8-11; Num. vi, 1-4; Prov. xx, 1; xxiii, 1-7, 15-21, 29-35; xxxi, 4, 5; Isa. v, 11; xxviii, 1-4; 1 Cor. v, 11; Gal. v, 10-26.

Faith.

Faith, according to the definition in the catechism, is not only a clear knowledge of what God has revealed in the gospel, but also a hearty trust wrought in us by the Holy Spirit that we are really saved by grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. This becomes in the highest sense subjective and individual to each believer. It is indeed the pearl of great price, worth more to each one of us than the whole world besides. It is the gift of God. It is free notwithstanding its inestimable value. Assured confidence, implanted by the Spirit's operation, working in the gracious power of the gospel, as preached and taught, is to be exercised under the divine command coming to us, to believe. What is commanded to be done is not impossible, for that would not be required. It is a precious gift and a blessed privilege and duty to keep faith in lively exercise.—Reformed Church Messenger.

Cheer Up.

We may be weary pilgrims here, many of us; but, after all, the Christian pilgrim is journeying to a beautiful country, bright and sunny, where all is peace and joy and love. This life is much what we make it, and the hardest life may be a sunlit path when the Sun of Righteousness shines upon it, for there no gloom can stay. The days may seem "dark and dreary," many of them, but they will come to an end. O pilgrim, press forward, then, crying, "Excelsior!" Falter not by the way, even though it be full of stumbling places. Let these only give fresh impetus and determination to win the reward awaiting thee, "Ye shall reap if ye faint not."—Episcopal Recorder.

Outdoor Peace.

Have fears and worries vexed you?
Go out among the trees.
Think: He who made all these,
Will He not well protect you?

Do thronging doubts molest you?
Sit down there in the shade,
Where heaven's joys o'er-run
And think how God has blessed you.

Does some one scorn or slight you?
Stand forth among the hills,
Forget your petty ills,
Remember, God will right you.

Do long, long sorrows grieve you?
Look upward to the stars
And think: No angel mars
The home that will receive you.

—Christian Endeavor World.

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Total Tons of Coal Produced in 1901	- - - - -	875,188 Tons

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